



## News Release

**For Immediate Release:**

Tuesday, March 24, 2009

**Media Contact:**

Kolbi Young

Public Relations & Marketing Coordinator

(o) 801-538-6847 (m) 801-231-6350

[kolbiyoung@utah.gov](mailto:kolbiyoung@utah.gov)

### **Low or No-Cost Health Care Options Available for Uninsured**

*UDOH working to get more Utahns covered by health insurance*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is hosting a Family Enrollment Fair today to encourage eligible, uninsured families to apply for coverage. The event is part of *Cover the Uninsured Week*, a national effort to get more Americans covered by health insurance.

Due to economic difficulties, many families are losing health care benefits as a result of job losses and employer budget cuts. But there are options available to help them provide health insurance for their loved ones. The following state programs are now open for enrollment:

- **CHIP** (Children's Health Insurance Program): Provides comprehensive health insurance for the uninsured children of families who qualify. For example, a family of four earning up to \$44,100 a year may be eligible.
- **PCN** (Primary Care Network): Provides primary preventive health coverage for uninsured adults. PCN is open and accepting applications until April 30.
- **UPP** (Utah's Premium Partnership for Health Insurance): Provides families with a monthly premium reimbursement when a previously uninsured individual or family enrolls in an employer health plan. Qualified families will receive up to \$150 per person per month.
- **Medicaid**: Provides medical assistance to low-income families, children, pregnant women, and disabled and elderly individuals.

As the Yerkes family knows, emergency medical costs can easily break an uninsured family's budget.

"We have struggled financially through job loss, health problems, a premature baby and other crises," said Cynthia Yerkes of Kaysville. "Not having medical insurance only added to the stress."

**-MORE-**

## Page 2 of 2 - Low or No-Cost Health Care Options Available for Uninsured

In 2008, Yerkes enrolled her two sons in CHIP. “It was a difficult and stressful time before CHIP,” she said. Like many Utah families facing financial troubles, Yerkes says hers is “a stable, middle class family who simply needed some help and have been very glad to receive it.”

According to the 2008 Utah Healthcare Access Survey, nearly 300,000 Utahns have no health insurance. Some 76,000 of them are children, and nearly 55,000 of those children are likely eligible for CHIP, UPP or Medicaid, but aren’t enrolled.

“We need to increase the number of eligible families who enroll in health insurance programs, especially now when more families are losing their health coverage, leaving their children uninsured,” said Gov. Jon Huntsman. “Utah families who go without health insurance are at risk of devastating their personal health and financial well-being,” he added.

To assist in state efforts to cover the uninsured, Utah was recently selected as one of only eight states to receive a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant. The *Maximizing Enrollment for Kids* grant funds will help Utah officials cover more kids by strengthening systems, policies and procedures to maximize enrollment and retention for eligible children. Under the direction of the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP), which serves as the national program office for *Maximizing Enrollment for Kids*, the program will measure the impact of these changes and will share findings nationwide throughout the four-year initiative.

For more information or to apply for low-cost or free health coverage, visit <http://www.health.utah.gov/healthservices.htm> or call 1-877-KIDS-NOW (1-877-543-7669).

###

*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*